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(Jailing as Spy on Visit Home to Poland Stuns U.N. Worker

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WARSAW, April 9 — Alicja Wesolowska is reportedly in shock and deeply bewildered by all that has befallen her since she returned to Poland eight months ago for what was to have been a brief and happy reunion with family and friends. Instead, it turned out to be a nightmare.

Miss Wesolowska, a gregarious 36-year-old United Nations employee, was arrested Aug. 10. She was seized after being under constant surveillance by the secret police and was subjected to relentless interrogation in Rakowiecka Prison here. Last month, a military tribunal sentenced her at a closed hearing to seven years in prison as a spy for "a NATO power."

Her story raises some disturbing questions. It was pieced together from interviews with persons who had contact with her during her two weeks of freedom before her arrest, with close friends and with other reliable sources. They cannot be named. Her family refused all requests for interviews.

Miss Wesolowska stopped off in Poland on her way from New York to take up a new post with the United Nations development program in Mongolia. It was her first visit home in the nine years since she traveled to the United States. She had gone to America at the invitation of a friend in Florida, a pen pal, and after six weeks resolved to earn her living in New York.

Finds Work at the U.N.

After doing various jobs, she went in 1971 to the United Nations as a guide. Eventually, she obtained a job as a secretary with the development program and she was asked, as a Russian speaker, to manage its office in Ulan Bator, Mongolia.

From the moment she entered the country, she was marked as someone meriting special attention. Her luggage was given a two-hour scrutiny by customs authorities. The car that took her from the airport, a Fiat driven by her brother, was stopped for a documents check.

She soon became aware that her every movement was being watched — a car containing four plainclothes policemen appeared before the houses she visited. But she acted unconcerned. "She knew she was being followed but she didn't seem to think about it very much," a friend recalled. "She didn't seem worried."

She visited Lublin, where she had majored in English literature at the university, Torun, where her parents live, and Warsaw. Her Polish passport had expired but she had United Nations travel papers and in Lublin she applied for and was issued a new Polish passport sometime around Aug. 5.

New Passport Is Seized

Several days later, two men in plainclothes burst into her parents' apartment in Torun, seized the new passport and told her to report to the central passport office in Warsaw within the next two or three days. She did so, and did not return.

A family member went to Warsaw the next day to look for her. No one at the passport office would answer inquiries. An official at the Ministry of the Interior said that she had been detained and that the family would be officially notified through the mails. A subsequent letter cited Article 124 of the penal code, which applies to persons cooperating with foreign intelligence agencies.

Throughout much of her confinement in Rakowiecka Prison, Miss Wesolowska was led to believe by her interrogators that her case was not that serious. She was told at first that she would not even

require a lawyer and she was under the impression that she would be freed in February, after six months of detention.

In contradiction to fragmentary reports in the Western press, which said that she had spent an arduous time in solitary confinement and suggested that she might have been brutalized to produce a confession, her treatment in prison was reasonably good. She shared a cell with three other women and was permitted to exercise and receive carefully supervised visits from her immediate family.

A Turn for the Worse

But she lost about 10 pounds on the prison diet and took up smoking. At one point, some of her hair began falling out.

"She wasn't physically mistreated," one source said. "She was well treated and because of that she was probably misled. She was preparing to leave the jail. It was the way they approached her to open her up."

Abruptly, after about six months, her case seemed to assume a new gravity and she was informed that she would need legal representation.

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Krzysztof M. Krawczyk

Alicja Wesolowska in her New York apartment last June

One item seized by the police that was entered as evidence against her was a red notebook taken from her parents' home. It contained the names of dozens of acquaintances from Hong Kong to New York, an international directory common among people who work abroad.

At her three-day trial in Warsaw's military district court, no journalist or foreign representative was admitted. Immigration officials at the airport turned back Freidrich von Hadding, the retired president of the Swedish Court of Appeals, who wanted to attend as a representative of the International Commission of Jurists.

Attempt to Recruit Is Charged

In the tiny courtroom on Nowowiejska Street, the state charged that she had received money for her illegal activities, but what witnesses were produced, if any, is not known.

Publicly the Government has said only that Miss Wesolowska was guilty of spying for a NATO power. But in court, the specific charge, which carries penalties ranging from five years in prison to death, was that she had attempted to recruit people from "the peoples' democracies," or Eastern Europe, to work for the Central Intelligence Agency.

Miss Wesolowska, looking drawn and guarded by a single policeman, was described as visibly stunned when the judge

read out a long sentence that called her "an enemy of the state."

The official Polish news agency, PAP, carried a brief report on the trial saying that Miss Wesolowska had pleaded guilty. But her supporters say that she made a long explanation of her conduct in New York and that it was "misinterpreted" so that it came out as an admission of wrongdoing.

Miss Wesolowska is said to believe that her case had become "political" and that the international publicity it received worked against her.

Her plight has attracted considerable attention. United Nations employees, arguing that her arrest and incarceration threaten their independence as international civil servants, have pressed Secretary General Kurt Waldheim to intervene. But the Polish Government has adamantly refused to permit any outside representative to visit her.

Her supporters, including a committee in New York formed to work for her release, suggest that one black mark the authorities had against her was that she obtained her United Nations job on her own, without being nominated by the Government. "The authorities believe it's impossible to get a United Nations job like that, that she must have been put up by somebody," said one friend of Miss Wesolowska here. "Nobody in Poland gets that kind of job without permission, and that's one thing they can't stomach — she wasn't cleared by security authorities."

Lawyers to Handle Appeal

Polish authorities decline to say what kind of evidence they have against her or to discuss the matter. Radio Free Europe has not used her case for propaganda purposes and Western embassies here seem conspicuously uninformed and uninterested.

Miss Wesolowska's case is coming up for review before the military chamber of the Supreme Court April 14. Her family has hired two lawyers to handle the appeal. She herself is not allowed to attend, but she has prepared a long explanation of all her actions, which she hopes will exonerate her or bring a reduction in her sentence.

Meanwhile, her prison conditions have become somewhat more rigorous. Her friends describe her as "completely shocked and crushed" by the court's sentence. "She just cannot believe that she may have to spend the next seven years in prison," one said.